

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument (1), which includes a metallic needle part (3) for working the tooth and a gripping end (2) attached to the upper end of the needle part to serve as a handle, wherein the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is substantially continuous, that the coefficient of friction of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end is higher than ~~the coefficient of friction of metal and polyphenylene sulphide which have typically been used in gripping ends of root canal instruments~~ 0.4, determined as a coefficient of kinetic friction and with steel as a material pair, and that the hardness of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end as well as the thickness of this material layer are so chosen that the shape of the gripping end (2) is recoverably deformable between fingers.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 2 1, wherein the aforesaid coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is within the range of about 0.5...0.8.
4. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2) is made of a homogeneous material.

5. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 10...95 Shore A, ~~preferably in the range of 30...95, suitably in the range of 50...85 and most suitably about 60...70 Shore A.~~
6. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2) has a surface layer (9), under which there is at least one layer of some other material.
7. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument according to claim 6, wherein the said surface layer (9) is thin, ~~in which case it~~ and has a ~~somewhat~~ lower hardness, ~~preferably about 5...10 units Shore A lower than the hardness of the~~ other portion of said gripping end (2) ~~made of a homogeneous material.~~
8. (New) Root canal instrument according to claim 3, wherein said coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is within the range of 0.7...0.8.
9. (New) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 30...95 Shore A.
10. (New) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 50...85 Shore A.

11. (New) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 60...70 Shore A.
12. (New) Root canal instrument according to claim 7, wherein said surface layer (9) has a lower hardness than the hardness of the other portion of said gripping end (2) by 5...10 units Shore A.